VIETNAM-ERA GI BILL DELIMITING DATE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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VIETNAM-ERA GI BILL DELIMITING DATE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 1984

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 8:30 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. G.V. Montgomery (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Montgomery, Penny, Rowland, Evans, Solomon, and Johnson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY

Mr. MONTGOMERY. The subcommittee will come to order.

We continue our policy of starting on time.

We are meeting this morning to hear testimony on whether or not the delimiting date of the Vietnam-era GI bill should be extended.

As you all know, the GI bill was enacted to provide vocational readjustment and restore lost educational opportunities to service members whose careers have been interrupted or impeded by reason of their active duty. The benefits provided are not a bonus for service, an economic supplement, or a lifetime benefit.

They give veterans an opportunity to catch up with their peers and ease the transition from military to civilian life. Vietnam-era veterans are entitled to 45 months of education or training, and they are given 10 years from the date of discharge or release from military service to use that entitlement.

As many of you know, title VII of the defense authorization bill, H.R. 5167, sets up a new peacetime GI bill. That legislation was passed by the House of Representatives, while the Senate passed a somewhat different version. We are now meeting in conference to work out the differences between the two versions.

During House debate on the defense authorization bill, Congressman Barney Frank expressed his concerns relating to the Vietnam-era GI bill. He stated that perhaps certain circumstances caused some Vietnam veterans to delay pursuing their educational goals.

Many are now enrolled in an education or training program, but they may be unable to complete their schooling before their 10-year delimiting date expires. Barney expressed his desire to look into this matter, and I assured him that the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations would schedule a hearing, which is now taking place.

We have had many legislative proposals which would extend the 10-year delimiting period. We are pleased that an author of one such proposal, Barney Frank, will be one of the witnesses this morning, along with the Veterans' Administration, as well as several veterans' organizations.

Before calling on Congressman Frank, I would like to call on Gerry Solomon of New York, the ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Education and Training, to make any statement he might have at this time.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. SOLOMON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the ranking Republican on this subcommittee, Bud Hillis, I would make the following statement.

Mr. Chairman, as we are all aware, the GI bill has been a subject of great discussion and admiration of late. This Nation just last week celebrated the 40th anniversary of the creation of the first GI bill during World War II.

In addition, the House has passed legislation creating a peacetime GI bill and we will soon be going to conference with the Senate to iron out differences between our version and the Senate proposal. Hopefully, we will prevail.

The present GI bill delimiting date is now generally set at 10 years from the date of discharge. It is by this date that eligible personnel must make use of their accrued educational benefits.

Although this represents a longer period of time than veterans of World War II and the Korean conflict enjoyed, there has still been concern expressed that the current delimiting date should be extended for 5 years, 10 years, or perhaps indefinitely.

This morning we will hear testimony on this subject from several divergent viewpoints. This testimony will play an important role in our committee's deliberations.

I look forward to hearing the positions that will be presented on this issue this morning, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you, Mr. Solomon.

We were hoping to take the GI bill up in conference. The schedule was to talk about the differences between the Senate and the House versions of the GI bill. It looks like there will be a delay on taking this matter up.

I doubt very seriously we will finish the conference report on the armed services bill before this weekend. I wish we could wrap it up. It is going awfully slow.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. The Chair would like to call to the witness stand Congressman Barney Frank.

I might say, as Barney comes up, he might introduce the witnesses or guests he has with him.

For the record I would like to thank Barney Frank for working with me pertaining to the GI bill. I was a little concerned, Mr. Solomon. Barney had an amendment he was considering offering to title VII of the armed services bill. If we got involved and opened up that section, there might be some problems in getting the new

GI bill passed in the House. He said if you will give us a hearing he would withdraw his amendment.

I appreciate it very much that we were able to keep intact the new GI bill we have been working on for years over here. The Chair would like to recognize the gentleman.

STATEMENT OF HON. BARNEY FRANK, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS, ACCOMPANIED BY AL HALLENBROOK, PRESIDENT, MASSACHUSETTS VIETNAM-ERA VETERANS ASSOCIATION, AND DIRECTOR OF VETERANS SERVICES, BROOKLINE, MA, AND DANIEL F. WHITCHER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VIETNAM VETERANS OF MASSACHUSETTS, INC.

Mr. FRANK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your having this hearing. It is nice dealing with someone of military background because we get an early start and get down to the rest of the day's work.

I appreciate Mr. Solomon and Mr. Evans also taking this opportunity. I want to express my appreciation for your courtesy during the debate on the authorization.

It was a busy time for all of us. I was glad to comply with your wishes about not offering the amendment because I am a very great supporter, as I think all the veterans are, of the efforts you are making to extend the GI bill.

I think the fact that in a cooperative way we are making this effort speaks very well for the House and this committee. I would not want to do anything to interfere with that.

Accompanying me is Mr. Daniel Whitcher, the staff director of the Vietnam Veterans of Massachusetts, Inc. He will be available to help me answer questions.

On my right is Bill Black of my staff, who will be available to whisper in my ear so I don't make too many mistakes.

I have the Roman numerals down better than I did on the floor of the House.

Our colleague, Mr. McNulty from Arizona, is a graduate of the Boston Latin School. He took great pains to make sure I got that right.

I am addressing a subject which you very clearly outlined in your opening remarks. Let me zero in on the points that concern me.

I would like, as all of us would like, to do as much as possible for our Vietnam veterans. We understand we are in a time of fiscal constraint.

I think people in the veterans community ought to be particularly appreciative of the efforts of yourself and the members of your committee because this is a time when very few new programs, if any at all, are coming forward.

And the fact that the House, without any great controversy, was supportive of this extension of the GI bill I think is a tribute to your leadership and to the appreciation that we have in the House of the continuing debt we owe people who serve in our armed services.

Not simply as a debt, although it is that. But also as a sensible effort to keep a military force of the type that we want. Because GI benefits are part of the overall package which we put in place to ensure that we have in the Army and the Navy, the Air Force and Marines, and elsewhere, the kind of young people that we want defending this country.

I think we all understand it is part of an overall package of inducements and compensation, as well as our recognition of these young people.

I have one particular concern which was brought to my attention through my district in 1981 and 1982. As you may know, I have had in that 2-year period an unusually large district. It went from one end of Massachusetts to the other. One of the things that came across was the fact that a number of Vietnam veterans were now enrolled in educational programs, but were going to have the delimiting date for them run out while they were in the middle of the programs.

There is a very good study done for the Veterans' Administration, pursuant to the GI Improvement Act of 1977—as this study points out, the Vietnam veterans' experience was different from that of earlier veterans.

You are well aware of this—and the fault was society's, not theirs.

This is the first generation of veterans in history who were unfortunately and tragically and unfairly blamed by some elements of this society rather than honored for the great sacrifices they made for their country.

And controversy over the war in which they fought was unfortunately allowed to spill over and affect them. As a result, some of the veterans we are talking about had adjustment problems, found the college campuses when they first came back inhospitable places for a variety of reasons.

For a variety of reasons they had troubles. Some had families, economic problems. For a variety of reasons we have some number of Vietnam-era veterans now enrolled in programs of higher education, they are there in good faith, working hard, they are trying to get the kind of education that will benefit them, their families, and this society, because an educated workforce is becoming more and more important to us in the international economic competition we are engaged in.

They find because they started late, because of adjustment problems, hostility they encountered, because of economic problems which forced them to go half time—all you have to do is take someone who for family responsibilities goes half time to higher education, raising a family, trying to support that family, showing time for affection to children, sharing in household duties, et cetera, if you just waited 3 years after you got out and then started school and went on a half-time basis, you would find the delimiting date being a problem.

And it can be a problem for others. I would like a very broad extension, obviously. At the very least, I would hope what we could work out now is some way to keep in school those who previously had enrolled in a program and are now in that program, are working, maintaining the grade level they need to be in good standing.

I think it would be a very grave injustice and an error if young people—some of them not so young anymore—people with family responsibilities, who got themselves organized in the face of all the problems they encountered as Vietnam veterans, they started this program, and now they find it is going to run out in the middle.

And for some of them, it will simply be economically impossible for them to continue. It just won't be something that they can handle economically with their family responsibilities and elsewhere without this kind of assistance.

We will have people who may have put in 4, 5, 6 years part time or full time in beginning in a program and than will be forced out short of a degree. I don't think that is consistent with the kind of concern for veterans that this committee has taken a lead in showing.

I know it is not anything any of us feel. So I am hoping we can work out a way at the very least as a stopgap to provide a way for people to stay in school.

I understand, and I have read some of the testimony, we do have on the books a law which says that if they can show there was some physical or mental disability that kept them from finishing, we will let them continue.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that as a step forward. But we have some proud people who were put through unpleasant, and in some cases, humiliating experiences because they were willing to fight for their country—to force them to come forward and say, "Well, I had some mental disability," to kind of put them in that position I don't think—that ought not to be the only rule.

There will be some that will be able to admit that. But I think it will be an obstacle for some. And in some cases it won't be a case of anything classified as a mental disability.

It will have been the normal readjustment problems. The young man gets out, he is in his early twenties, he gets married, has kids, goes on a part-time basis, maybe a kid gets sick, he has to drop out for a semester or a year.

There are a lot of ways someone could have the 10-year date be a problem. The marginal utility of just allowing those people to finish school so their 3, 4, and 5 years wouldn't be wasted I think would be about as good return on a dollar that the Federal Government could get.

A couple of the statements I notice raise a problem of this being subject to appropriation. I talked about that at the time. I want to make it clear.

I am not here advocating what we do be subject to appropriation, no more than any other member of this committee am I looking to be further under the domination of our good friends on the Appropriations Committee. They are great people, but there are times when some of us would like to just be able to get a program through.

The only reason the subject to appropriation idea came up is we were subject to the rules of the House and the budget procedure, and that was simply to avoid being ruled out of order.

As the chairman and the other members know what a Member of Congress will do to avoid being ruled out of order in a given situ-

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ation is not always what you would do in an ideal situation. We are more nearly in an ideal situation here.

I am here asking that this be a continuation of the entitlement, in a very small way, for those who are already in school.

That is essentially what I have. I have spoken to people in my own State, in Southeastern Massachusetts University, University of Massachusetts. I think it would be—as I said—a very good investment if we allow these people to continue.

I notice in this study one of the recommendations was that the delimiting date be extended somewhat indefinitely. As I said, if we cannot get that, and I understand that, I am asking for something much smaller, at least for those now in school.

The report talks about the negative impact service in the military had inevitably on educational and occupational attainments. Twenty-seven percent of Vietnam-era veterans and 22 percent of Vietnam veterans were college graduates compared to 46 percent of those in a comparable age group.

I think the case is fairly strong. I understand—I think we are all sympathetic to that goal. I have seen the CBO cost estimates for an open-ended extension, a dropping of 10-year delimiting date.

It is not realistic probably. Neither then would the estimates be for what I am talking about.

I cannot believe it would be terribly expensive if we would simply as an immediate measure allow those who are already enrolled in a program to continue. I would just add there could be no incentive effect there, because I would be talking about people involved as of January of this year or as of September of last year—no one could then take advantage of that.

We are not talking about anybody saying, "Now I can go to school. Having waited 9 years I am going to start for the first time."

I am talking about people who made the good faith effort and who would otherwise be caught in an unfortunate trap. I just don't want to add to the unfairness that Vietnam veterans have already been subjected to, having them lose out in the middle or toward the end of a college education.

I don't think any of us want to see that. And I know—I appreciate your willingness to have us work together to see if there is some way to avoid it.

Thank you very much. Mr. Whitcher and I certainly are available to respond to any questions.

Mr. MONTGOMERY We would be glad to have Mr. Whitcher make a statement.

Mr. Frank, let me say I thank you for your very strong testimony. I am impressed that you have taken that large manual, even though it does have Roman numerals in it, and you did look through it.

Sometimes we wonder if people do look at those thick manuals.

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Black, my staff member, looked through it, and he found the places for me and underlined them.

One aside. I went to Egypt for the first time this year. I was very surprised in Egypt to find out that the Arabs do not today use Arabic numbers. Somebody will have to explain that to me.

I am afraid, when I go to Italy this year, of what I am going to find in Rome. I guess I will find Arabic numbers in Rome.

I have also been joined by Mr. Al Hallenbrook, who is president of the Massachusetts Vietnam Era Veterans Association, and veterans' agent for the town of Brookline, Massachusetts.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. We will be glad to hear the gentleman. After they testify, we will hear from the Veterans' Administration. We hope they can answer the question of what the costs would be for extending the delimiting date for those who have started an educational program, what the delimiting date will get them, and other information that will be helpful to the subcommittee.

Mr. FRANK. I appreciate it. Especially when it comes from the Veterans' Administration, not OMB.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. We work with the Veterans' Administration. In fact, I don't recall us having OMB up here in a number of years, to be honest with you.

Do either one of you gentlemen want to make a brief statement?

STATEMENT OF DANIEL WHITCHER

Mr. WHITCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting us speak today. I want to thank you for being here.

I am Dan Whitcher. I am the executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of Massachusetts. We are an organization of different Vietnam veterans groups in the Commonwealth. We work on such issues as legislation and we do advocacy work for and on behalf of Vietnam veterans.

Before we came here today we had the chance to make a telephone call to the public universities in Massachusetts of which there are 30 of them. We were able to get ahold of about 19 or 20 of them.

We found out that the average in the spring semester of 1984 was about 170 Vietnam veterans in each one of these institutions. These were not era veterans. These were in-country veterans.

We found that after doing the survey and talking to the veterans affairs officers at these colleges that the Vietnam veteran is returning to school because he feels that the people are willing to be a little bit more receptive to his particular circumstances.

And we feel that the continuation of the GI bill benefits for these gentlemen is one of our first priorities. We feel that the post-stress trauma is not just in relation to a person when he/she was in Vietnam. We also feel post-traumatic stress is also in relation to the negative homecoming we had.

We are hoping on behalf of this committee, in conjunction with the good work of the Honorable Congressman, Mr. Frank, we can get this extended for Vietnam veterans.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Whitcher appears on p. 22.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

All right, Mr. Hallenbrook.

STATEMENT OF AL HALLENBROOK

Mr. HALLENBROOK. I am Al Hallenbrook. I am director of Veterans Services for the town of Brookline, Massachusetts.

Prior to that, I was coordinator of veterans affairs under the old VCIP program at Framingham College, a 4-year public institution of about 3,000 students.

During my stay there, both as a student and as a coordinator of veterans affairs, we found invariably when a student lost 10 years, that is, the 10 years cut him off in mid-program, they dropped out.

In 1976, May 31, when the cut-off date for the pre-1966 veterans occurred, we lost 35 percent of our enrollment. After that we tracked it on an informal basis, not expecting the 10 years to be extended—but we did track it informally and found almost invariably the reason the veteran had to drop out was that the GI bill monthly check took the place of a part-time job.

He could work full time or work part time and with the bill have enough money, perhaps with his wife's earnings, to stay in school, get the education, in the hope of being able to earn more money and being a more productive taxpayer in the future.

However, when that check stopped, financial necessity dictated he drop out of school or she drop out of school and secure a part-time job to replace the lost income. We take the position with Mr. Frank for those people enrolled or those people who have been cut off by the 10-year date and didn't get a chance to finish, be allowed to finish, it would be a matter of justice.

Traditionally, veterans have returned far more to the country, both economically and professionally than the GI bill has cost. Five years after World War II these great chambers were predominantly veterans. Today, 15 years or so after Vietnam, there is only a handful of Vietnam veterans serving in its chamber.

Give us the chance and we will show you we have the leadership capability to give a great deal more to this country than we already have. We simply ask for a little simple justice and the ability to finish our education.

Thank you.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you, Mr. Hallenbrook.

We have adjusted the new GI bill to the modern times by including provisions for transferability of benefits and leaves of absence, things that we didn't have in the old GI bill. But one figure that strikes me is the Bureau of Census says that every American who gets a college education will earn $350,000 more than the individual who did not get a 4-year college education.

Therefore, that brings in more revenue, makes the individual a better citizen. So it does have merit to see that these veterans do get educated.

Mr. Solomon.

Mr. SOLOMON. I don't have any questions at this time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Lane Evans.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Barney, you related that you have a lot of veterans now in school who would lose their benefits. We have the same situation in Illinois. But we also have people who got out of the service in the early seventies who did not use the GI bill for a lot of the same reasons that you indicated, went into factory jobs, and now have lost these jobs and cannot use the GI bill because of the delimiting date.

I am certainly sympathetic to your proposal to extend the delimiting date for those who are presently in school, and I wonder if that same kind of problem exists in Massachusetts, where you have a lot of veterans who never used the GI bill for technical training or college education and are now losing their jobs in heavy industry in the midwestern and northeastern States.

Mr. FRANK. Let me respond briefly.

I agree. You are one of the Vietnam veterans serving here. I was struck by Mr. Hallenbrook's statement. I was hoping he wasn't planning to make that move in the near future, at least in terms of increasing the number of Vietnam veterans in Congress from certain locations.

But the point is a good one. One suggestion was people who work, now unemployed, who have a work history. We tell people you have been in the steel industry, the auto industry, the garment industry, you are young enough to learn the new skills for the technological industries.

I think that is perfectly relevant. Mr. Whitcher I think wants to comment on that.

Mr. WHITCHER. We have found that in-country Vietnam veterans usually come from the lower economic levels of life, and that when they returned home one of the things they had going for them was their strong work ethic.

In today's society all these people who did not receive an education are the ones being let go. We feel it is a great opportunity to have somewhere to go, some kind of training program, if not a college.

I am not too sure on how we are going to go about this—is it going to be a 4-year college, 2-year training course, or something like that? But we wish, for the gentlemen and ladies that did not go to college and need an education or some kind of training today, that the doors be opened and let us in.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. JOHNSON. I just have one question.

While certainly there are not many Vietnam veterans in the Congress, they may be proportionately better represented than the women of America.

I wonder if the program, the exception to the limit that is currently in the law, that excepts veterans from the eligibility date because of physical or mental disability does not qualify Vietnam veterans who have suffered post-traumatic stress syndrome.

And has that exemption provision been useful or can it be?

Mr. FRANK. Let me say—I tried to address that before. Clearly it is preferable that it is in the law. I salute those who were able to get it in there and fought to see the regulations were as fair as they could be.

I guess there are two questions. In some cases when you talk about someone who went to school with full family responsibilities on a half-time basis, that is 8 years. So if there was almost any delay they would be in trouble.

In some cases the delay may not have risen to the level of a mental disability. A young person gets out, hostility on the campus,

not being sure what you are doing, believing that you might be able to get the same kind of job that your mother and father had had, to work in that industry, and then finding you were in a declining area geographically.

So there are a lot of reasons that would not be covered by that which would put people in this situation.

Second, we are talking about some people who may not be ready and willing yet to come up and say quite as forthrightly as it might be healthy, I had this mental disability.

Unfortunately, this society still stigmatizes mental illness. So there is a deterrent effect in that, particularly people who come up and say,

> Wait a minute, I went over when I was 18 years old, I fought this war, I came back, and I was kind of messed up because of the way people mistreated me, and I wasn't old enough to handle it, and now they want me to come in and say I was mentally disabled and kind of cop of plea.

I hope we can work with those people and say: You should not feel embarrassed about that. But still it will be a deterrent in some cases.

I think it is an advantage. It helps the problem, but doesn't totally solve it.

Mrs. JOHNSON. Thank you.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much, Barney. I would suggest that you have a staff member stay around here and see what the Veterans' Administration says, and also the veterans organizations.

Mr. FRANK. I did read their testimony. I wanted to respond to that point about subject to appropriation.

Mr. WHITCHER. Mr. Chairman, I have one request. I am hoping the Chair will be able to honor it.

We are aware that today we are able to give oral testimony. And we have up to a week following today's date to submit written testimony.

I would like the pleasure of the Chair to grant us—next week is Fourth of July, and the rest of the Nation will be celebrating the victories and the freedom we have given them—we are wondering if we could have an extension of 1 week to submit written testimony to this committee.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. The Chair has no objections. I would not want a volume, though.[1]

I would like it to be within reason.

Mr. FRANK. I will make you a promise, Mr. Chairman. I will read everything they send you. I will be the editor.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Our next witness will be from the Veterans' Administration, Mr. John Hagan. We are very glad to have you with us again.

I believe you have been here a couple of other times. You might introduce the people who are with you from the Veterans' Administration.

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[1] See p. 22.

STATEMENT OF JOHN HAGAN, DEPUTY CHIEF BENEFITS DIRECTOR, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION; ACCOMPANIED BY JUNE SCHAEFFER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE, AND DEAN GALLIN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL

Mr. HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On my left is Ms. June Schaeffer, Assistant Director in our Education Service.

On my right is Mr. Dean Gallin, Deputy Assistant General Counsel.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, am grateful for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our views concerning an extension of a veteran's 10-year delimiting date for using educational benefits under the current GI bill.

Ms. Starbuck would have been here, except that she has a severe summer cold. At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize that the subject of my testimony relates to extending the period during which a veteran may use his or her educational benefit entitlement following discharge from active duty, as distinguished from the December 31, 1989 statutory termination date for all payments of education allowances under the current GI bill.

As you are aware, the administration is on record as favoring repeal of the 1989 educational benefits program termination date, so as to afford those veterans discharged after December 31, 1979, the full 10-year delimiting period granted other eligible veterans in which to use their earned educational entitlement.

To better appreciate our views concerning extension of the delimiting date, I believe that a brief recounting of the delimiting periods under earlier GI bills would be helpful.

The purpose that underscores all educational assistance programs—World War II, Korean conflict, and the current GI bill—has been to assist our Nation's veterans in making the adjustment from military to civilian life. In particular, this assistance was, and is, in the form of financial aid to attain an educational status that these veterans might normally have aspired to and attained had they not served their country.

From the very beginning of these programs, it was never contemplated that this assistance was to be a continuing benefit. These programs were meant to serve as readjustment measures during the period following a veteran's release from military service.

Most World War II veterans had 4 years from the date they were separated from service in which to begin a program of education, and 9 years, or until July 25, 1956, to use their entitlement. Korean conflict veterans had 3 years following separation from service in which to begin a program of education or training, and 8 years from separation from service, or until January 31, 1965, to use their entitlement.

Under the law creating the current program (Public Law 89–358, as amended), veterans discharged after January 31, 1955 (the date the Korean conflict officially ended), were allowed 8 years from June 1, 1966, or 8 years from the date of their discharge or release, whichever was later, in which to complete their program of education.

Unlike their counterparts in World War II and the Korean conflict, no time limitation was imposed on the post-January 31, 1955, veterans for beginning their training. With the enactment of Public Law 93-337, on July 10, 1974, the overall delimiting period was extended to 10 years.

The subject of today's oversight hearing is whether the current delimiting date should be extended. This is an idea which the Veterans' Administration has consistently opposed, and continues to oppose.

Forty years ago, Congress recognized the need for a readjustment program for the men and women who served in the Armed Forces. Time has shown the wisdom of that decision.

We believe that further extension of the delimiting date is not warranted and is inconsistent with the readjustment intent of our education programs. the existing delimiting date already represents a far longer eligibility period than that provided veterans who served during World War II or the Korean conflict.

We believe that veterans eligible under the current program have had sufficient time to pursue education or training to assist them in meeting the readjustment concept of the GI bill.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, we note that the current GI bill makes provision for extending the delimiting date under certain limited circumstances. Public Law 95-202, enacted on November 23, 1977, provided for a limited extension for any eligible veteran, spouse, and surviving spouse who was prevented from beginning or completing a chosen program of education because of a physical or mental disability not the result of such person's willful misconduct.

In such case, the delimiting date may be extended for the amount of time the claimant was prevented from beginning or completing the program, as determined by the Administrator.

Mr. Chairman, the other type of extension is what we usually refer to as the targeted extension of the GI bill delimiting date. This program, originally enacted as part of Public Law 97-72, and subsequently amended and extended by Public Law 97-306, is targeted to Vietnam-era veterans who have remaining entitlement when their 10-year delimiting date has expired, and who are unemployed, underemployed, unskilled, or educationally disadvantaged.

Veterans eligible under the targeted delimiting date extension are granted until December 31, 1984, to use their remaining entitlement for the purpose of pursuing a program of vocational training, apprentice or other on-job training, or, if they do not have a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate (GED), to pursue secondary training to aid them in obtaining either their diploma or GED certification.

Public Law 98-77 further liberalized the targeted delimiting date extension provision by expanding the scope of vocational training authorized to include the pursuit of associate degree programs which are predominantly vocational in content.

In summary, the basic 10-year eligibility period currently provided is a longer period for using readjustment educational benefits than was afforded under either of the previous GI bills. Congress has enacted limited extensions tailored to address certain specific concerns.

We believe there has been no demonstration of need that would justify any further extension of the current delimiting date provisions and, therefore, we remain opposed to such action. We would reiterate the administration's strong support for the repeal of the 1989 termination date.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to reply to any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Miss Starbuck appears on p. 27.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

Can you give us the cost of what Mr. Frank had requested? He would prefer the Vietnam GI education bill be extended, but he knows that would just about be impossible considering the cost. But those who are in school now and would be cut off by the delimiting date, do you have any figures on that, how many people that would effect? That would be most helpful to the subcommittee.

Mr. HAGAN. Mr. Chairman, the overall 5-year projected cost would be $131,750,000.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. That is on Mr. Frank's proposal?

Mr. HAGAN. On Mr. Frank's proposal.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. That would be total cost over what period?

Mr. HAGAN. Five years. First year costs, we are saying there would probably be an additional 30,000 trainees, with an estimated cost of $68 million.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Give us all the information you have there. Are these veterans who went to Vietnam? I know one of the veterans' service organizations, I think the Vietnam Veterans of America, say limit—if I read it right quickly here—their testimony indicated support for a limited extension for those who were in-country, who went to Vietnam. I assume because of the late date, most of those did not go to Vietnam. Is that correct?

Mr. HAGAN. I am not positive about that. But I think we are projecting this based upon those who served during the Vietnam era, not necessarily those who went to Vietnam.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Anything you can add now? This is the area we need to know more about.

Mr. HAGAN. Ms. Schaeffer is pointing out it is mainly those veterans who were separated from service primarily in 1973, 1974, and 1975. So most of those whould have been Vietnam-era veterans, but would not necessarily have served in Vietnam.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Well, most Americans don't serve in combat. I am not making that a problem.

Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. We know that this has been a longer delimiting date. But does the VA recognize there might be special circumstances to justify the continuance of the delimiting date? What about those veterans who are presently in programs such as JTPA, and the GI bill? What happens to these people?

We are all concerned about the current budget deficit. But if people are forced to drop out of retraining programs or technical kinds of programs because of the delimiting date, I think there would be a bigger loss to our Treasury if they had to go through a second retraining program.

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Is there any kind of coordination between what the VA is talking about and some of the other programs in the Federal Government?

Have you thought about those kinds of consequences?

Mr. HAGAN. I think that we have considered the other programs in reaching our conclusions. But as referenced in my statement, your committee was very conscious of the problem of the Vietnam-era veteran, and the committee was responsive and extended the delimiting date an additional 2 years from the first bill.

We are saying that this program is an adjustment program and that we feel that the 10-year delimiting is enough time for the average veteran to have accomplished readjustment.

We are further saying that the provisions in the law that provide for extending the delimiting date due to extenuating circumstances should be adequate to accomplish the purpose.

We all are aware of the benefits that are to be gained by this country when we have people who are better trained and earn more money. The chairman has pointed out the person with the educational background, college degree, probably will earn $350,000 more than a person without a degree.

Mr. EVANS. I guess my question is what happens to these people that are not average veterans, who may have had problems in using the GI bill. If they lose it, where can they get technical training? Are they going to be eligible for further kinds of jobs programs, or may they be forced to throw away that 1 year of training?

Is that wise in terms of our efforts to retrain people and our efforts to train them in the first place? What will happen to these people?

Is there any kind of way that they can get into other programs? Has that been thought through? The GI bill not only helps individual veterans, it helps this country as well. Is there any kind of transition being planned for those veterans that are going to lose their training?

Has the VA even considered that? Are they just throwing people off the program saying that the average veteran could complete it within the delimiting period, therefore, these people that fall into the category of not being average simply must lose their benefits, lose the benefit of whatever training they have had because they have not been able to complete the program?

Mr. HAGAN. I really don't think that we are saying that we are just forgetting these veterans. The Emergency Job Training Act is one provision that takes care of veterans who are having difficulty with employment. And that is a training-type program.

Mr. EVANS. I guess what I am saying is, are these veterans that are in a technical training program paid for by the GI bill going to have to go into a second retraining program, or training program, I should say, under the Emergency Jobs Training Act for veterans?

I think after one or two training programs they are going to be pretty frustrated in general. Why can't they just complete the one they have already started rather than dropping out of the one they are in?

I have had workers who have been through two or three Federal retraining programs. Quite frankly, they are pretty frustrated.

I just think this ought to be a factor in your consideration, when you are saying we ought not to extend the delimiting date. I wonder if that has even been considered at all.

Mr. HAGAN. We have considered that. Our final decision considered whether or not this is going to be a continuing benefit or whether or not it is going to be a readjustment benefit as we have provided veterans of our wars.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

Dr. Rowland.

Dr. ROWLAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hagan, how does the VA define full readjustment of a veteran to civilian life?

Mr. HAGAN. Full readjustment to civilian life? I don't know that I can really give you a definition, but I will ask Ms. Schaeffer if she can.

Ms. SCHAEFFER. No. I don't think we have ever really defined it.

Dr. ROWLAND. Let me ask you something else. What are the guidelines for determining the need for additional continued GI benefits?

Do you have some guidelines for that?

Ms. SCHAEFFER. You mean for the physical or mental disability adjustments?

Dr. ROWLAND. Yes.

Ms. SCHAEFFER. Anyone who can show that they had had a physical or mental disability during the period of their eligibility before their 10-year delimiting date could be extended for a like period of time.

And the evidence could be a doctor's certificate, hospitalization, whatever. It runs from a broken leg to appendectomies, to actual mental disabilities.

Dr. ROWLAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Penny.

Mr. PENNY. I have no questions.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. We would like to thank the witnesses and would hope that one person from the Veterans' Administration would stay around to hear what the veterans organizations have to say. But we would like to thank our witnesses from the Veterans' Administration for being here this morning.

Mr. HAGAN. Mr. Chairman, I want to apologize that we do have to leave, because we have to attend another hearing of the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee at 10 o'clock. Thank you, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Well, the Chair would like to have somebody stay from the Veterans' Administration.

Mr. HAGAN. We will have someone here, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. OK. We would like to have one person stay.

We would like to call up a panel now. From the American Legion, Mr. John Sommer, Jr., of the American Legion; Mr. Mayo, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Mr. Richard Weidman, Director of Government Relations, Vietnam Veterans of America; and Mr. Frank Weil, National Secretary of the American Veterans Committee.

You gentlemen have been here before and without objection your full statements will be put in the record. Go ahead, Mr. Sommer.

STATEMENTS OF JOHN F. SOMMER, JR., DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION; PHILIP R. MAYO, SPECIAL ASSISTANT, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS; RICHARD F. WEIDMAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA; AND FRANK E.G. WEIL, NATIONAL SECRETARY, AMERICAN VETERANS COMMITTEE

Mr. SOMMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The American Legion appreciates this opportunity to comment on a recent proposal to provide an extension of the delimiting date for the current GI bill educational assistance program.

The Legion intensely supported the enactment of Public Law 93-337 which extended the period of time following discharge or separation from active duty that a veteran would be afforded educational assistance under chapter 34 from 8 to 10 years.

Following the approval of that law, and implementation of the 10-year delimiting period, it became the policy of the Legion to oppose any further general extension of the delimiting date. The reasoning behind the formulation of this policy was that in most cases a 10-year period following active service appeared to be a reasonable amount of time to complete a readjustment or rehabilitation oriented educational program.

However, during the 95th Congress it became evident that some Vietnam veterans, particularly combat veterans, were unable to complete their education or training within the 10-year period because of psychological problems and mental or physical disabilities.

Likewise, early in the 97th Congress, a great deal of concern was expressed about continuing economic and readjustment problems and the unemployment of Vietnam veterans. The Veterans' Affairs Committees in the Congress addressed these problems through legislation that when enacted provided targeted extensions of the delimiting period to Vietnam veterans who have not been able to take advantage of education or training opportunities for reasons beyond their own control.

Although, as I previously stated, the Legion was mandated to oppose the general extension of the delimiting period, we did support the limited extensions so these targeted groups of deserving Vietnam veterans could take advantage of the educational assistance administered by VA.

The American Legion continues to oppose a general extension of the 10-year delimiting period as it would tend to compromise the readjustment nature of the current program by placing it in the category of an ongoing general entitlement program.

In addition, as I stated a moment ago, the Congress, as illustrated by the examples set forth in our full statement, has most certainly addressed the dilemma of those Vietnam veterans truly in need of an extended delimiting period to secure education or training that heretofore eluded them for reasons beyond their control.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my summary.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Sommer appears on page 38.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Mayo.

STATEMENT OF PHILIP R. MAYO

Mr. MAYO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee for asking our views on the extension of the Vietnam-era GI bill delimiting date. We appreciate the opportunity to come before you.

Mr. Chairman, the VFW supports the removal the delimiting date from the Vietnam-era GI bill as we have for a number of years.

As outlined in my prepared statement, we would not support tying such an extension to the availability of appropriations.

Again, we appreciate, Mr. Chairman, this subcommittee's interest in keeping veterans' benefits a tangible reward for good and honorable service to our Nation.

That concludes my oral statement.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Mayo appears on page 30.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Sommer, I understood that the American Legion would oppose extension of the delimiting date. You don't oppose it?

You don't think it is necessary. Is that what you said?

Mr. SOMMER. We are opposed to a general extension of the delimiting date, yes, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. And the VFW?

Mr. MAYO. We support removal of the delimiting date—period.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. All right. Mr. Weidman.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. WEIDMAN

Mr. WEIDMAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you, to you and members of the subcommittee, for asking us here this morning from Vietnam Veterans of America to offer our views on extension of the delimiting date.

I would say before I offer a brief summary, Mr. Chairman, we of the Vietnam Veterans of America are as delighted as I hope you are to find ourselves in total agreement with our good friends of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on this particular issue, and hope we can move forward, together, from the events of earlier this month.

I would like to offer some thoughts in regard to questions offered by Mr. Rowland before, having to do with readjustment. I would like to submit my statement for the record.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Without objection, all statements will be put in the record.

Mr. WEIDMAN. The question of readjustment. I have the honor and privilege of serving on the Veterans' Administrator's Advisory Committee on Readjustment of Vietnam Veterans. And later this week we are going to be taking up, on Friday, the whole question of employment, and in the Veterans' Outreach Centers, particularly.

The recommendations and deliberations that have gone on for over a year now in that committee are moving toward a conclusion that readjustment really has to encompass the whole veteran. And I think one of the things often left out, and certainly in some of the testimony offered this morning from the Veterans' Administration, is readjustment is a two-way street.

It—readjustment—is not just what is going on with the individual veteran. It is predicated on a society that is ready to accept that individual veteran back into that society.

I would suggest that that was not the case in the early seventies and that was not the case when most of us should have, and traditionally would have, furthered our education and acquired the skills necessary in order to take our place within the society.

I won't belabor that. But I do think the recommendations that we offered to you, Mr. Chairman, are heading in the right direction in terms of extending the delimiting date and really starting to develop the argument, if you will, that this is not just a benefit.

It is an investment that really must be made in the Vietnam generation—just as we would applaud your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to make that an investment in our nephews and sons who are entering the service today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Weidman appears on page 31.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Did I misquote your position from the Vietnam Veterans of America when I stated that the delimiting date at least be lifted for those who served in-country? Have you changed that position?

Or that is not your position?

Mr. WEIDMAN. At minimum, we are in favor of removing the delimiting date altogether for those who served in-country. All the studies done by the VA show a marked disparity between the educational level between those who served in the era and those who served in-country. In other words, those who served in the era were able to advance their educational levels significantly more.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. I am getting confused on in-country. What is your definition of in-country?

Mr. WEIDMAN. Anyone who received a Vietnam service medal.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. And went to Vitenam?

Mr. WEIDMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. That is what you classify—served in Vietnam, as in-country?

Mr. WEIDMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. That is what I thought, but I wasn't quite sure.

Thank you.

Mr. WEIDMAN. Much debate has been made about how do you define a combat MOS. I know people—John Deering, from Nashville, TN, for example, who did not have a combat MOS formally, but saw some heavy action, and spent 5 years in a POW camp. So how do you define combat veteran? It is just anyone who served in Vietnam, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMREY. I think the figure is about 1 out of every 10 servicemen actually have a combat MOS. So you cannot base it on those just who got in combat.

Also, you cannot base it on service-connected veterans, who would be the only veterans that would draw compensation. I was in Normandy for the 40-year anniversary, and we met the 70 or 80 rangers who are left. They are the ones that acutally climbed up

the cliff and they were not wounded at all, but they were in heavy combat.

So you just cannot eliminate people who did not get hit. I just wanted to make that point for the record.

There are others who were in combat who were maybe not disabled by the combat.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Weil.

STATEMENT OF FRANK E.G. WEIL

Mr. WEIL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to submit my statment for the record and point out that in the haste of typing in the statement, my name is not spelled correctly. It should be W-e-i-l.

Mr. Chairman, I find myself quite amazed to be on the same side as the Veterans of Foreign Wars. But so be it.

We share with them the view that the delimiting date should be removed. We start from the premise that the GI bill is not an expenditure, but an investment.

My statement contains a quotation from our platform which points out that the Treasury has received back in increased taxes through better education something on the order of three times the amount of money that went into the original GI bill.

The delimiting date is, in part at least, based on the idea that if a veteran did not really care enough to get his or her education soon after they came out of service, they shouldn't be allowed to have it as an afterthought.

This seems to assume that the veterans were busy playing polo, staying in the country club, or banking 6-figure salaries.

I would like to point out, Mr. Chairman, that most of the veterans that did not take advantage of the GI bill were those whose responsibilities and/or earning capacity were so low that they could not afford to take 2 or 3 years at the subsistence level that the GI bill provides.

In a sense, the ones who have not yet been able to take advantage of their educational opportunities are the ones that need it most.

Also, as you may know, Mr. Chairman, the American Veterans Committee has long had an interest in women veterans. Many, many of those delayed even thinking about the GI bill because they were bringing up small children or possibly even working while the spouse, often also a veteran, obtained an education.

So we believe that the delimiting date should be removed and we also believe that this would have a positive effect on current recruitment, becaue it will remove the incentive for those now in service to leave in order to take advantage of educational opportunities before the deadline in 1989, whereas if there are no delimiting dates, many of those will be quite willing to stay in for a normal career, and then put the GI bill payments on top of the pension long enough to undertake their education.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Weil appears on page 33.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you, Mr. Weil.

I am going to ask Dr. Rowland to take the Chair in just a minute.

Would any of you like to comment on this? One of the problems we have that comes up before this committee pertaining to extension, striking out the delimiting date, is pertaining to the other services that were educated under the World War II and Korea GI bills. If you veterans organizations have taken a position, would you briefly express your feeling? Should we lift the delimiting date on World War II, go back and make those persons eligible—veterans of World War II and Korea? I am sincere in my question.

That is a problem we hear especially from the Korean veterans, that we want to give a certain period of time to use benefits and they have a problem. Have the organizations taken any position on that?

Mr. Sommer?

Mr. SOMMER. Mr. Chairman, to my knowledge the American Legion, has never considered that specific issue. As a member of the staff, I am not authorized to initiate instant policy.

So I cannot offer comment on that proposal at this time.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. I understand it.

Mr. MAYO. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, to my knowledge, has not taken a position on that in the form of a resolution. I have the same constraints as John Sommer.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Weidman.

Mr. WEIDMAN. In the resolution which you have before you from our national convention last fall, Mr. Chairman, the discussion based on that revolved around an experience that came to light of removing a way of viewing higher education which we believe is outmoded.

The concept of lifelong learning has come to be accepted throughout the country today. Most people do not leave high school and go to 4-year lock-step in order to get a B.A. or B.S.

Whereas, if you look at the percentage of where people are in higher education, in training, in this country, the majority of people are going evenings and part-time and over an 8- or 9-year period.

As an example, in the midseventies, Connecticut passed a bill granting tuition waiver at all State supported institutions for Vietnam veterans. Two or 3 years after that, I think it was 1977, 1978, the VFW and American Legion approached the same coalition of Vietnam veterans that got the tuition waiver for Vietnam-era veterans and said, "Why don't we extend this to all wartime veterans?"

So all the veterans organizations argued for that, and it was granted by the legislature. Noboby really thought that the Korean veterans and the World War II veterans would utilize it. But an example of how it has had a positive impact on Connecticut's economy is that at Waterbury, Connecticut, in the year 1980, 1981, that academic year, 9 percent of the veterans in the student body of their community college were World War II and Korean veterans.

The reason was as General Tire closed their factories, the metallurgy industry closed down a number of their factories, Alcoa, particularly, and here you had people who had 15, 20 years left of

work life, or 10 years left, who needed to retool themselves in order to finish out their work life productivity.

Nobody really anticipated this volume of Korean veterans and World War II veterans would come back to school, but, in fact, it has happened. And it is a positive law. For that reason we would favor it.

I can safely say, Mr. Chairman, that Vietnam Veterans of America would be in favor of removing the delimiting date, no matter what the era.

Mr. WEIL. Mr. Chairman, we have not dealt specifically with the subject. But our resolution says veterans who for good reason were unable to take advantage of educational and other benefits. I assume the VA could probably fashion a set of regulations to determine what constitutes good reason and what does not constitute good reason.

I think we will stand on that.

It may be somewhat more difficult for a World War II or Korean veteran to establish that good reason has existed for a much longer period of time. But such veteran should be able to establish good reason if the circumstances warrant.

Dr. ROWLAND. Mr. Sommer, I am interested in knowing why the American Legion assumed a position somewhat different to the other veterans organizations that are testifying here this morning.

Mr. SOMMER. Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned in my full statement, following the extension of the delimiting date during the 93d Congress from 8 years to 10 years, the Legion has been mandated to oppose any further general extension of the delimiting dates because it was the feeling of the policymaking bodies of the organization that it would turn a readjustment program into an ongoing general entitlement program.

As I mentioned in my summary, we have supported extensions of the delimiting date in certain instances. For example, for Vietnam veterans who, because of psychological, mental or physical disabilities, were unable to pursue a program of education—we supported an extension of the delimiting date for these individuals during the 95th Congress. And for unemployed, underemployed, or undereducated Vietnam-era veterans—we supported a target extension of the delimiting date for them during the 97th Congress.

So, although we have been opposed to supporting a general extension, we have taken a look as specific instances that have arisen, and on which hearings were held and have taken exception to that mandate.

Dr. ROWLAND. Thank you, Mr. Sommer.

Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. Following up on that, you are opposed to a general extension. Would you be opposed to what Barney Frank proposed?

He talked about extending it for people that are presently enrolled in schools. Does the American Legion have a position on that?

Mr. SOMMER. Mr. Evans, no, sir. We have not brought this issue before the Veterans' Affairs and before the Rehabilitation Commission, or either of our two policymaking bodies, and, therefore, do not have a policy on it.

As I mentioned to Chairman Montgomery, I am not in a position to make instant policy for the organization.

Mr. EVANS. But in light of your support of other types of extensions, general kind of extenstions, could you make a statement or could you get back to us, as to whether or not you could address this problem with your people?

Mr. SOMMER. Yes, I can get back with a statement for the record.

Mr. EVANS. All right. Fine. Thank you.

Dr. ROWLAND. Mr. Penny.

Mr. PENNY. I have no questions.

Dr. ROWLAND. If anyone does have any questions, they may submit them for the record.

Since there is no additional business to be transacted, the subcommittee stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

[Whereupon, at 9:45 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned subject to the call of the Chair.]

[The following was received for the record:]

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY DANIEL FRANCIS WHITCHER OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS' OF MASSACHUSETTS, INC.

I appreciate this opportunity to submit written testimony in addition to my oral comments of June 27, 1984. I wish to acknowledge the generosity of the Subcommittee, exemplified by the Chairman, in honoring my request for the extra time in which to do so.

I was 19 when, after 20 months of Vietnam service, I returned home. The same type of home 72% of those of us in Vietnam came from. One of lower economical/societal levels.

Everybody noticed, nobody cared. They had their own battles. It was said, "to leave him alone, he's a Vietnam Veteran."

Employment. I looked for work. "What's your draft status?" I'm a Vietnam Veteran. It was the attitudinal change that bothered me the most.

Education. My 10th grade schooling wasn't enough to get in college.

Girlfriends. Their friends wouldn't understand.

Veterans' Administration. They were concerned if something was wrong. How was I to know about Post Traumatic Stress?

Veterans' Organizations. I was called a coward, beaten up and thrown out of my first V.F.W.

At 16, I was idealistic, proud and naive.

At 19, I was hyper, intense and bewildered.

At 20, I was paranoid, cold and numb.

Lacking coping skills and a support system, I left. In New Hampshire; California; Kansas; Washington; it didn't matter. Once my Vietnam Veteran status was known, I was different. By then I didn't care anymore. I continued to wander, in a zombie state, all over the world, working in no growth jobs, just existing.

My metamorphosis started at the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in November 1982. The names, the sharing and the crying sort of cleansed my soul. I became determined to be successful because of those names and not let them be a waste.

I read Title 38, Chapter 31 through 36 and my original intent was to list all the sub-chapters, sub-sections and numbers which apply to granting the removal of the delimiting date in Chapter 34, Subchapter II, sub-section 1662. I changed my mind because there are so many, though the most pertinent states, (Veterans' Readjustment Act of 1966), "Generally, no educational benefits may be afforded beyond 10 years from the date of discharge."

Vietnam was like no other war. It's Veterans' like none of the previous war Veterans'. It wasn't the lack of parades that affected us, it was the hatred.

The Veterans' Affairs Committee has established programs for Vietnam Veterans'. PL-97-72 was to restrictive and Post Traumatic Stress isn't counted as being a incapacitating illness. It is. The Emergency Job Training Act of 1983 is not working. Ronald W. Drach of the D.A.V., testifying before the Subcommittee on Education, Employment and Training, says it all. Approximately $90 million of the funds for this program will be returned to the Treasury at the current rate of expenditure.

That is ⅔ of the projected 5 year cost, stipulated by the V.A. in granting the educational extension.

The Veterans' Administration is about to expand by 50, the number of Vietnam Veterans' Outreach Centers. Doesn't that mean anything? Doesn't that substantiate what I'm saying? It won't be until 1986 that P.T.S.D. will peak. What then? The reason the Outreach Program works so well is because Vietnam Veterans' are helping Vietnam Veterans'. We know. Let the Vietnam Veterans' use his unallotted entitlements for education, training and/or vocational assistance. We have a support system now. Granting or entitlements to an education or vocational training will get us off the "rolls" by 1990. We will then reimburse the Treasury in the same manner that all of our peers have done in the past. I am eligible to enter college now as my military G.E.D. was validated in 1981. I'm back on my feet and ready.

I volunteered, served and fought for this great country of ours and I apologize for being slow and awkward in using my benefits. I am only a "Vietnam Veteran." Because of that I have a request. It's the same request I made, and you honored, at the end of my oral testimony.

Grant me, along with other Vietnam Veterans', the extra time.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS—BOSTON,
Boston, MA, July 3, 1984.

Hon. SONNY MONTGOMERY,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives,
335 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing us to submit testimony to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations regarding extending the current ten year delimiting date on Educational benefits for Vietnam-era veterans. Your decision to hold these hearings is to be commended. It demonstrates once again your commitment to serving the interests and needs of Vietnam-era veterans.

Enclosed you will find written testimony to be submitted for the record. I hope you will take time to read it. As I state at the end of my remarks, I feel that the economic and moral arguments for extending the current ten year delimiting statute are compelling. I hope you will agree. I also hope we may expect legislation to emerge from your Committee sometime next Fall to deal with this issue in at least some limited form.

Again, thank you for holding these hearings. If we can be of any assistance to the Committee I hope your staff will feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,

KEVIN BOWEN,
Director, VET Program.

STATEMENT OF KEVIN BOWEN, DIRECTOR OF VETS PROGRAM

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: I'd like to begin by commending you for holding these hearings on the issue of extending the current ten year delimiting statute of Vietnam Era Veterans Educational benefits. As the Director of the University of Massachusetts/Boston's Veterans' Upward Bound Program, I think I speak for all veterans in the program when I say we appreciate this opportunity to present our case before you. As you may be aware, for those Vietnam-era veterans most in need of the services Veterans' Upward Bound provides, this issue is a critical one.

Our program is one of twenty-seven Veterans' Upward Bound Programs operating nationally. For the past five years we have been providing GED and College Preparatory instruction as well as personal and career counseling to local veterans. Many of these, at least half, have been Vietnam-era veterans. We have had many successes. There are many stories I wish you could hear; in fact the most eloquent testimony I can think of is written in the lives of these men and women, in the challenges they've met and the changes they've made.

Space does not allow this; yet I should tell you, in my time here, I've met veterans whose skills were so low I wondered how they were ever accepted into the military, and I've met other veterans whose talents have amazed me. They've all shared one thing in common, however, an experience of rejection.

I'm sure you're familiar with many of their stories. Some entered college soon after discharge only to find that many colleges and universities were willing to take their money but then left them to fend for themselves in an alien and often hostile

environment. Others never even thought of entering school. It was something no one in their family had ever done. Instead, they went first to work and drifted from one entry level job to another till they finally ran into the dead end that comes of having no skills or educational background. Others had readjustment problems so severe they could barely function. One way or another, all of them eventually found themselves at our door.

For years the existence of the ten year delimiting date had no relevance whatsoever in the lives of these men. It is only when they arrive here that the relevance hits home. Many of them are forced to walk away from the program. Still others try to go through the program without the GI Bill. They find jobs on the side. Given the shock that comes of drawing on grey matter that hasn't been used in years and the pressures of work and family, it's a difficult road. Despite the initiative they show, the facts show these veterans have a far higher drop out rate than others. Those that do finish are faced with another dilemma: how can they finance any further education or training. Again, the facts show that far fewer of these veterans go on to pursue their educational goals.

Some of thse veterans file for extensions. While they wait for the decision they live in a world of doubt; they stand in the doorway of the office talking about their prospects, shifting from one foot to the other, between hope and resignation if not despair. Others file PTSD claims though they find it degrading. Why should they have to 'work' the system? Why should they have to present themselves as subjects in an ongoing investigation? Why should they have to go through life proving themselves the proverbial exceptions?

There are two Vietnam combat veterans, both with purpule hearts, that I have working as tutors right now. Both went through our program and then matriculated into the University. Both have seen their ten year delimiting dates go by. One was an Irish citizen when he was drafted; the other had only completed fifth grade. Neither has a disability or rating that qualifies for Vocational Rehabilitation. Neither thought much about schooling till a year ago. Now they are both fighting for extensions and PTSD claims and are experiencing all the strain and stress that entails. They want a way out of the dead end situations they've found themselves in and have found education to be the way. The shame is they have to fight for it.

It's probably obvious by now that I personally set great stock in the value of education. My own experience may be an anomaly, but I dealt with a negative homecoming experience by throwing myself into my studies. That took me a long way, through undergraduate education, graduate school, and postgraduate study in Europe. I'd be deluding myself if I did not admit that it was in one sense a self-treatment program for my own PTSD. But the thing is it worked.

Now I find myself in the position of telling others that they must fight to get even the smallest piece of that opportunity.

I realize I have been speaking so far about a very specific and perhaps small portion of the total population affected by the current restrictions on the delimiting date. In fact there are close to nine hundred students enrolled at this University who are affected. A compelling argument can be made for all of these veterans. Reality, however, tells me that argument will go nowhere. The current atmosphere of fiscal austerity in the Congress and particularly in this administration would not tolerate the projected expense. Compromise is required.

The problem the Committee faces is complex and obviously political. If the testimony of the Veterans Administration on the 27th is any indication of the help to be expected from that quarter, the Committee has my sympathy. In all good conscience, and as a person with some respect for logical thought processes, I can't let that testimony pass without comment.

The Veterans Administration attacks the proposed extension first on the basis of parity. If World War II and Korean Veterans had only ten years to use the G.I. Bill, it argues, Vietnam Veterans should have only the same. This is apples and oranges. World War II and Korean Veterans did not have the negative homecoming experience Vietnam Veterans did. They were welcomed into the colleges and Universities of this country as most Vietnam Veterans were not. Their readjustment problems were problems the whole society shared and took to heart. Not so the Vietnam Veteran.

Still let's disregard the apples and oranges and just talk apples. The benefits World War II and Korean Veterans received far exceeded those extended to Vietnam Veterans. Does the VA believe it is the same to give one man ten apples a year for ten years as it is to give another one apple a year for the same period?

Only if benefit levels and homecoming experiences were the same would the VA's argument make sense. All the VA's argument does is divide the interests of the

World War II and Korean Veterans constituencies from those of their sons and nephews.

Further, the Veterans Administration argues that ten years is a sufficent period for readjustment. Here I commend the Subcommittee for asking the VA representatives how they defined readjustment. Without a functional definition of readjustment how can the VA make policies that cut across the board. Obviously they choose to avoid making that definition by simply declaring the period of readjustment is at an end. It doesn't take a George Orwell to see what's happening here. Had the Vietnam Veterans of America had hold of this testimony before the hearing, I'm sure they would have retracted their statement about there being enough philosophers in the world.

In spite of the uncompromising position of the Veterans Administration I am sure the Subcommittee will keep its mind open. Two compromises presented at the hearings seemed promising.

Congressman Barney Franks' proposal to extend the delimiting date for all those Vietnam-era Veterans currently enrolled in programs is, I believe, a sound compromise. My only suggestion is that the extension be granted also to those Vietnam-era Veterans currently enrolled who have already passed their ten year delimiting date and have not exhausted their benefits. Equity demands this.

A second compromise worthy of consideration is that proposed by the Vietnam Veterans of America: extending the ten year delimiting date for all in-country veterans. This proposal may set a questionable precedent dividing Vietnam-era and Vietnam Veterans into two opposing constituencies. But the evidence suggest that an extension of the delimiting date would have far less impact on Vietnam-era Veterans since they have experienced far less severe adjustment problems and have used their benefits at far higher rates.

If it is unrealistic to expect a sweeping extension of the ten year delimiting date at the present time, I hope the Subcommittee will consider these proposals seriously as at least a partial hedge. In the Fall I would hope that the Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment, with the blessing of the Chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, would draw up a Bill to cover these proposals. If hearings are held at that time, we would hope that our testimony would be invited.

Again, I thank the Chairman and Committee members for convening the hearing on the 27th of June. The issue for us remains very much alive. It is an issue not simply of prosperity, but of survival. Economic as well as moral arguments, I think you will agree, and dictate a positive response.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS—BOSTON,
Boston, MA, July 3, 1984.

Hon. G.V. MONTGOMERY,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans Affairs,
U.S. House of Representatives, 335 Cannon House Office Bldg., Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY, having attended the hearings which you held on Wednesday June 27, 1984 on the issue of extending the delimiting date for the use of educational benefits by Vietnam veterans, I was grateful for your ruling to extend the deadline for submission of testimony by one week. Enclosed please find testimony from me on behalf of the William Joiner Center for the study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

As an educator long concerned with providing higher educational services to Vietnam veterans, as the Co-Director of a center devoted to the study of the war in Vietnam, and as a veteran myself, I cannot argue my position forcefully enough on extending the delimiting date of the G.I. Bill for Vietnam veterans. As I noted in my statement, I have witnessed personally, many times, the major obstacles which Vietnam veterans find attempting to earn college and technical degrees and I can assert without hesitation, that the special circumstances surrounding their readjustment to civilian life prevented many from making use of the benefits which the Congress extended to them when it passed the Vietnam-era G.I. Bill.

I feel that my statement deals with the major reasons why the delimiting date should be extended and trust that the Committee on Veterans Affairs will take this testimony into account.

Again thank you for allowing us to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

PAUL L. ATWOOD,
Co-Director, William Joiner Center.

STATEMENT OF PAUL L. ATWOOD, OF THE WILLIAM JOINER CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/BOSTON

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, my name is Paul L. Atwood, and I am the Co-Director of the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The center conducts research on the war in Vietnam, teaches courses on the war to undergraduates and seeks to enhance educational support services to Vietnam-era veterans.

Currently, in 1984, approximately ten percent of the University of Massachusetts at Boston student body is composed of Vietnam-era veterans. Ten years ago this figure was closer to fifteen percent. As Massachusetts only public, urban University UMB has served the educational needs of more Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans than any other institution in the Commonwealth. I have been involved with special programs for veterans at UMB virtually since their inception in the late 1960's and have administered programs serving literally thousands of student veterans. Consequently, I am very familiar with the special problems Vietnam veterans have faced in attempting to use their G.I. educational benefits. For reasons which I will articulate below, I am definitely in favor of extending the delimiting date of the Vietnam G.I. Bill of educational rights.

I would like to reinforce the testimony of Mr. Weidman of Vietnam Veterans of America. Campuses were decidedly uncongenial places for returning veterans up until at least the pull out of U.S. troops from Vietnam in 1973. But the hostility encountered by veterans who would become students by other members of academic communities was not the only reason veterans decided to withdraw from institutions of higher education or decided not to attend in the first place.

It is a well known fact, by now, that enormous numbers of veterans who served in Vietnam, especially those engaged in direct combat, have experienced what the Veterans Administration calls post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD or the so-called "Vietnam syndrome"). The experience of fighting in a Southeast Asian rice paddy one day and sitting, in some cases literally, in a classroom a few days later was a readjustment problem too difficult to be overcome in a short time by many veterans. The symptoms of readjustment problems are well known to those actively engaged in the field and these include, among others, inability to concentrate, insomnia, nightmares, fixed obsessions and the like. All of these combined make it extremely difficult for a veteran, no matter how much he may have wished to succeed, to be capable of the discipline and focus required of students at institutions of higher education. In my own experience, I have witnessed countless veterans struggle to keep up with the pace of academic life only to be defeated by the emotional and psychological effects of the war still unresolved within themselves—circumstances obviously beyond their control. Couple these readjustment problems with the hostility of other students and faculty and we have a perfect formula for a high attrition rate among Vietnam veterans in colleges and universities.

The Veterans Administration has gone on record before this sub-committee as being opposed to an extension of the delimiting date because in the V.A.'s opinion a ten year duration was plenty of time to use entitlement and, furthermore, because the present delimiting date already represents a longer eligibility period than provided veterans of World War II or the Korean conflict. Despite nearly twenty years of experience dealing with the readjustment problems of Vietnam veterans, the V.A. still refuses to recognize the special circumstances surrounding Vietnam veterans—despite having gone on record as recognizing the symptons of PTSD which is *prima facie* evidence of the uniqueness of these circumstances. What the V.A. leaves unsaid is that the fathers and uncles of Vietnam veterans did not develop post-traumatic stress disorders in the numbers which afflicted Vietnam veterans because they did not fight an unpopular war and had the support of the entire population upon their return from overseas. Moreover, as students, World War II and Korean Veterans were welcomed openly by college faculty and other students. Furthermore, the G.I. Bill for veterans of those wars was much more liberal in its tuition provisions and the stipends offered monthly to student veterans. The readjustment problems of returning veterans of World War II and Korea were, thus, attenuated and of minimal duration after those conflicts. On the other hand, Vietnam veterans have undergone a severe and protracted period of readjustment. As Prof. John Wilson of Cleveland State University has shown, the average amount of time a Vietnam veteran spends after discharge just reaching the point where readjustment is beginning to take place is eight years. Thus while then ten year delimiting date for Vietnam veteran is more generous than that provided for his World War II and Korean counterpart, arguably, given the special social-psychological circumstances encountered by the Vietnam veterans, we have not been generous enough. The position taken by

the V.A. on this issue is a strange one, indeed, for a agency the motto of which is "to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

A number of other points deserve consideration. As Chairman Montgomery has suggested in his article in The Washington Times of June 27, 1984 in favor of a new G.I. Bill, as a nation we will not be incurring a cost but rather making an investment in the nation's future.

With all due respect to Chairman Montgomery, the arguments he adduces for a new G.I. Bill apply equally to the Vietnam-era Bill. Extending the delimiting date for veterans who were not able to take advantage of their educational benefits, or who used them only incompletely, would renew a similar investment. Let us remember the potential investment every member of the armed forces is making when he/she puts on a uniform. Almost sixty thousand armed Americans made the ultimate investment in Vietnam and many millions more paid high premiums in the form of wounds—both physical and emotional and in precious time spent attempting to recover losses. Extending the delimiting date will accomplish what the original G.I. Bill was intended to do, namely to compensate veterans for the investment they made and the sacrifices they endured.

Finally, extension of the delimiting date makes sound economic sense for another reason. The last ten years or so have witnessed an enormous revolution in higher education particularly at the community college level. Unlike four year liberal arts institutions, community based two-year colleges provide technical training in various high demand occupations such as medical technology, computer sciences, business, electronics, para-legal professions and social services. Thus two-year colleges provide real training for jobs which actually exist in the employment market. It is these areas of education and training which would be most attractive to older veterans returning to school. Indeed, the kinds of training offered by two-year community colleges across the nation would provide the kind of human capital "retooling" which Vietnam Veterans of America advocates in its testimony before this body. The types of training presently offered by community based colleges were not available one decade ago. A unique opportunity now presents itself for veterans to obtain the training which they, as individuals, need to take their rightful place in society. The opportunity also exists for the nation to avail itself of more highly trained and skilled personnel.

If for any number of reasons extension of the delimiting date to all Vietnam-era veterans is impossible then I support a compromise which would extend the date for those veterans who served in Vietnam since V.A. data shows that this group was much less likely to have used educational benefits. Moreover, it is "in-country" Vietnam veterans who were at greatest risk and who paid the highest price. Finally, while it is true that as a whole, Vietnam veterans are more highly educated than their World War II fathers it is not true that they are so relative to the same-age population who did not serve in the armed forces. At the time of enlistment those who were being drafted or who were enlisting, virtually by definition, did not have either the educational background or the economic means to obtain a college deferment from service in the Armed Forces. The original intent of the G.I. Bill was to compensate those veterans for the sacrifice in time spent in service to enable them to regain the competitive edge with those who did not serve. It should be stressed, in closing, that military personnel with combat Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), because they required less sophisticated training, tended to be the most educationally disadvantaged group of all and were composed of ethnic and racial minorities, graduates of poor inner-city high schools and high school drop-outs. Thus, this group is most in need of the kind of opportunities which an extension of the delimiting date would afford them.

On behalf of all the veterans who both serve and study in the William Joiner Center at UMass/Boston I wish to thank Chairman Montgomery and the members of this sub-committee for allowing us to submit this testimony.

STATEMENT OF DOROTHY L. STARBUCK, CHIEF BENEFITS DIRECTOR, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: I am grateful for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our views concerning an extension of a veterans' 10-year delimiting date for using educational benefits under the current GI Bill.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize that the subject of my testimony relates to extending the period during which a veteran may use his or her educational benefit entitlement following discharge from active duty, as distinguished

from the December 31, 1989, statutory termination date for all payments of educational allowances under the current GI Bill. As you are aware, the Administration is on record as favoring repeal of the 1989 educational benefits program termination date, so as to afford those veterans discharged after December 31, 1979, the full 10-year delimiting period granted other eligible veterans in which to use their earned educational entitlement.

To better appreciate our views concerning extension of the delimiting date, I believe that a brief recounting of the delimiting periods under earlier GI Bills would be helpful.

The purpose that underscores all educational assistance programs—World War II, Korean conflict, and the current GI Bill—has been to assist our Nation's veterans in making the adjustment from military to civilian life. In particular, this assistance was, and is, in the form of financial aid to obtain an educational status that these veterans might normally have aspired to and obtained had they not served their Country. From the very beginning of these programs, it was never contempated that this assistance was to be a continuing benefit. These programs were meant to serve as readjustment measures during the period following a veterans' release from military service.

Most World War II veterans had 4 years from the date they were separated from service in which to begin a program of education, and 9 years, or until July 25, 1956, to use their entitlement. Korean conflict veterans had 3 years following separation from service in which to begin a program of education or training, and 8 years from separation from service, or until January 31, 1965, to use their entitlement.

Under the law creating the current program (Public Law 89-358, as amended), veterans discharged after January 31, 1955 (the date the Korean conflict officially ended), were allowed 8 years from June 1, 1966, or 8 years from the date of their discharge or release, which ever was later, in which to complete their program of education. Unlike their counterparts in World War II and the Korean conflict, no time limitation was imposed on the post-January 31, 1955, veterans for beginning their training. With the enactment of Public Law 93-337, on July 10, 1974, the overall delimiting period was extended to 10 years.

The subject of today's oversight hearing is whether the current delimiting date should be extended. This is an idea which the Veterans Administration has consistently opposed, and continues to oppose.

Forty years ago, Congress recognized the need for a readjustment program for the men and women who served in the Armed Forces. Time has shown the wisdom of that decision. We believe that further extension of the delimiting date is not warranted and is inconsistent with the readjustment intent of our education programs. The existing delimiting date already represents a far longer eligibility period than that provided veterans who served during World War II or the Korean conflict. We believe that veterans eligible under the current program have had sufficient time to pursue education or training to assist them in meeting the readjustment concept of the GI Bill.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, we note that the current GI Bill makes provision for extending the delimiting date under certain limited circumstances. Public Law 95-202, enacted on November 23, 1977, provided for a limited extension for any eligible veteran, spouse, and surviving spouse who was prevented from beginning or completing a chosen program of education because of a physical or mental disability not the result of such person's willfull misconduct. In such case, the delimiting date may be extended for the amount of time the claimant was prevented from beginning or completing the program, as determined by the Administrator.

Mr. Chairman, the other type of extension is what we usually refer to as the targeted extension of the GI Bill delimiting date. This program, originally enacted as part of Public Law 97-72, and subsequently amended and extended by Public Law 97-306, is targeted to Vietnam era veterans who have remaining entitlement when their 10-year delimiting date has expired, and who are unemployed, underemployed, unskilled or educationally disadvantaged. Veterans eligible under the targeted delimiting date extension are granted until December 31, 1984, to use their remaining entitlement for the purpose of pursuing a program of vocational training, apprentice or other on-job training, or, if they do not have a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate (GED), to pursue secondary training to aid them in obtaining either their diploma or GED certification.

Public Law 98-77 further liberalized the targeted delimiting date extension provision by expanding the scope of vocational training authorized to include the pursuit of associate degree programs which are predominantly vocational in content.

In summary, the basic 10-year eligibility period currently provided is a longer period for using readjustment educational benefits than was afforded under either

of the previous GI Bills. Congress has enacted limited extensions tailored to address certain specific concerns. We believe there has been no demonstration of need that would justify any further extension of the current delimiting date provisions and, therefore, we remain opposed to such action. We would reiterate the Administration's strong support for the repeal of the 1989 termination date.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to reply to any questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: The American Legion is pleased to have the opportunity to present its views on the question of whether or not the delimiting period of the Vietnam era veteran's educational assistance program under chapter 34 of title 38, United States Code should be extended.

Educational and training programs for Vietnam era veterans were developed by Congress to enhance and make more attractive, service in the Armed Forces of the United States; extend the benefits of higher education to qualified and deserving young persons who might not otherwise be able to afford such an education; provide vocational readjustment and restore lost educational opportunities to those servicemen and women whose careers were interrupted or impeded by reason of active duty; and aid such persons in attaining the vocational and educational status which they might normally have aspired to and attained had they not served their country?

Available statistics illustrate the value of the GI Bill education and training programs, in that over 70 percent of eligible Vietnam era veterans have had at least some training under GI Bill programs.

The American Legion intensely supported the enactment of PL 93-337, which extended the period of time subsequent to a veteran's last discharge or separation from active duty that such veteran would be afforded educational assistance under chapter 34 of the title from eight to ten years. Following the approval of that law and the implementation of the ten-year delimiting period, it became the policy of the Legion to oppose any further general extension of the delimiting date. The reasoning behind the formulation of this policy was that in most cases a ten-year period following active service is a reasonable amount of time to complete a readjustment or rehabilitation program.

However, it became more and more evident that some Vietnam veterans, particularly those who have been involved in heavy combat, were experiencing delays or hardships in completing their programs of education or training within the delimiting period because of mental or physical disabilities. Therefore, The American Legion supported the passage of PL 95-202, which granted an extension of the applicable delimiting period for a length of time, determined by the Administrator based upon available medical evidence, that a veteran with such disability was prevented from initiating or completing a program of education.

Likewise, during hearings held in early 1981, the Legion expressed its concern about continuing economic and readjustment problems, and the unemployment of Vietnam era veterans. It was for those reasons that the Legion, although mandated to oppose a general extension of the chapter 34 delimiting date, did not oppose the targeted extension proposed in the legislation under consideration at that time, and which was mandated through the enactment of PL 97-72.

During subsequent hearings in 1982, we expressed extreme concern that the regulations proposed by VA with respect to the implementation of the targeted extension of the delimiting period were far too restrictive; that they did not fully address the purpose for which the legislation was enacted; and that if the eligibility criteria was not broadened, the limited extension of the ten-year delimiting period set forth in PL 97-72 would have been of assistance to a minuscule number of unemployed Vietnam veterans. These hearings, as you are aware Mr. Chairman, resulted in a liberalization of those regulations.

Although not directly related to the delimiting period, the Legion has also voiced strong support for other legislation of great importance to veteran students and unemployed Vietnam era veterans, one example of which was the restoration of eligibility for veterans in receipt of educational benefits and/or disability compensation to secure Guaranteed Student Loans and Pell Grants, eligibility for which, in most instances, was eliminated for the purpose of cost savings, through enactment of Public Laws 97-35 (Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981) and 97-92 (Joint Resolution making further continuing appropriations for Fiscal Year 1982).

In addition, The American Legion very actively supported the enactment of PL 98-77—the Emergency Veterans Job Retraining Act—to provide training to unemployed and underemployed Korean and Vietnam era veterans.

Most recently, we have supported increases in the rates of subsistence and educational assistance allowances for veterans pursuing education or training programs administered by the Veterans Administration.

Mr. Chairman, we are cognizant of a recent proposal, the intent of which would provide an extension of the delimiting date for the current GI Bill educational assistance program, and make such an extension subject to available appropriations.

As previously stated, The American Legion is opposed to a general extension of the ten-year delimiting period, as it would tend to compromise the readjustment nature of the current program by placing it in the category of a general entitlement program.

In addition, as illustrated by the examples of enacted legislation set forth in this statement, the Congress has most assuredly addressed the needs of those Vietnam era veterans who are truly deserving of an extended delimiting period in order to secure education or training opportunities that they have heretofore not been able to get for reasons beyond their control.

With respect to subjecting the proposed extension of the delimiting date to available appropriations, such a proposal is inconsistent with the intended purpose of the educational assistance program for Vietnam era veterans.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our statement, and again, we appreciate this opportunity to present our views to the Subcommittee.

STATEMENT OF PHILIP R. MAYO, SPECIAL ASSISTANT, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you, on behalf of the 1.96 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, for the opportunity to come before you to express our views with respect to the extension of the delimiting date of the Vietnam-era GI Bill.

Mr. Chairman, the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in this connection are contained in Resolution No. 623 entitled "VIETNAM-ERA GI BILL AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (a copy of which is appended hereto for your review), which was adopted at our most recent National Convention held in New Orleans, Louisiana. The resolution resolves that ". . . we support legislation to remove the delimiting and expiration dates for VA educational benefits for veterans with active service after August 4, 1964 . . ."

The impetus for the adoption of this resolution at our National Convention was the recognition of the facts that education and inflation costs have substantially reduced the value of those benefits; the elimination of VA educational loans; the introduction and advancement of initiatives providing for a "new" peacetime GI Bill; and that many veterans, for a variety of reasons, were unable to complete educational programs prior to the tolling of their delimiting date.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the VFW has expressed similar views before another subcommittee of the Veterans Affairs Committee for a number of years and will, shortly, express similar views to the Committee on Veterans Affairs of the Senate.

In suggesting to this body that action be taken with respect to our attached resolution, we would ask this Subcommittee to be mindful that suggestions have been made by some to extend the delimiting date of the Vietnam-era GI Bill "subject to appropriations." Although we support such an extension, we are adamantly opposed to removing such benefits from the realm of entitlement programs. It is our considered view that making such a program subject to appropriations denegrates the authority of the Veterans Affairs Committee over its programs, and may well be the forerunner of similar consideration being given to accomplishing the same end with other veteran programs.

Mr. Chairman, the VFW thanks you and the Subcommittee for your many diligent efforts in gaining and securing for veterans the myriad of benefits which are an expression of national gratitude in recognition of good and valuable service, and which have over the years given veterans a very necessary impetus in their efforts to rejoin and successfully compete with other constituencies in our society.

Resolution No. 623

VIETNAM-ERA GI BILL AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Whereas, veterans educational assistance terminates for most veterans 10 years after their release from active duty; and

Whereas, many veterans, because of readjustment problems, are unable to pursue or complete their educational training within their delimiting date; and

Whereas, there has been new "GI Bill" legislation introduced which would remove the current expiration date for Vietnam veterans who have remained in the service; and

Whereas, these veterans must rely on other educational assistance programs which are being targeted for elimination under proposed budget cuts; and

Whereas, education costs have increased dramatically since the last cost-of-living increase was granted; and

Whereas, for those reasons many veterans will be unable to pursue their educational goals; now, therefore

Be it resolved, by the 84th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to remove the delimiting and expiration date for VA educational benefits for veterans with active service after August 4, 1964; and

Be it further resolved, a realistic GI Bill and vocational rehabilitation cost-of-living increase be granted.

Adopted by the 84th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 12–19, 1983.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. WEIDMAN OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. Chairman, my name is Richard Weidman, and I serve as Director of Government Relations for Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). Vietnam Veterans of America wishes to thank you for the opportunity to appear here this morning to share our views and concerns on the Vietnam Era GI Bill delimiting date with you and your distinguished colleagues.

Mr. Chairman, there has been a great deal of concern on this issue within the ranks of Vietnam Veterans of America for some years. Appended to my statement here today is Resolution V–8, reported out from the VVA Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and adopted unanimously at the First National Convention of Vietnam Veterans of America last November. This resolution, as you will note, calls for "the elimination of any delimiting date regarding utilization of GI Bill benefits". Our position on this issue is that elimination of the so-called "delimiting date" is not just a benefit that it would be nice to accord to those who were there to sacrifice in the time of our nation's need, but that it is indeed vital to the national interest today to have a targeted elimination/extension of the delimiting date.

In early 1971, shortly after discharge, I accepted a position as Special Assistant to the President of Johnson State College, a small state supported four year college in Vermont. I had already graduated from Colgate University before service as a medic with the American Division in I Corps, RVN, and at Walson Army Hospital, Ft. Dix, New Jersey. I was older than many of my colleagues and had my value system well formed and tested even before service in Vietnam. Even though it was in the independent and highly patriotic state of Vermont, I remember the campus as distinctly unfriendly to Vietnam veterans. I was a member of the administrative staff as well as a member of the faculty, teaching courses in the Humanities Division, and I experienced significant animosity directed toward me by fellow administrators, and particularly fellow faculty members and students. What we at VVA have come to call the "Kojak" syndrome of the stereotype of the "war crazed" vet was in full sway in the late sixties and early seventies, and campuses were not friendly places toward Vietnam veterans, particularly those who had been through Vietnam with a combat MOS. Many of us were having significant readjustment problems, whether we knew it or not, whether we admitted it or not, even to ourselves or to each other. By 1973, I was serving as Director of Student Support Services (Dean of Students), and many Vietnam veterans were approaching me as a fellow vet for assistance. To help keep people in school, we set up a campus veterans assistance office (this was before VCIP), which blossomed into PAVE of Vermont, the only statewide Vietnam veteran community based organization in the country that delivered assistance for educational, employment, and other needs of veterans. And yet, it was not enough to keep a lot of "in-country" veterans in school. The limited amount of positive reinforcement we could provide could not overcome the weight of prejudices and pressures that were pushing veterans into sullen silence and off the campuses.

Today, we have a population of Vietnam veterans that is mature and ready to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to keep the American economy strong in the next twenty years, but they have long since passed their "delimiting date". Many returned home from the service and entered into the workforce of traditional industries in their area, often after a brief and unhappy attempt to upgrade their skills by attending a public institution of higher education. Now, many are out of

work because those jobs no longer exist. Private employers will train veterans for specific tasks, especially if they understand and avail themselves of incentives under P.L. 98-77. However, the private sector alone is not going to undertake equipping people with the basic body of fundamental knowledge necessary even to qualify for their job specific training programs. Either the public sector must respond or much of America will become an economic backwater.

There are a number of salient facts to consider here. First, as Dr. Pat Choate, Chief Economist for TRW, noted in *Retooling the American Work Force* (Northeast-Midwest Institute; Washington, D.C.; July 1982):

The public training programs that do exist serve less than 8 percent of the population; they focus primarily on the economically and culturally disadvantaged and provide some entry level training while giving very limited attention to retraining employed workers and upgrading their skills. Yet over 90 percent of those who will be working in 1990 and over 75 percent of those who will be working in the year 2000 already are adults, and most are working now. Thus, the nation's success in renewing the economy will depend heavily on its success in sharpening the skills of current workers.

Second, also as noted by Dr. Choate:

Public incentives overwhelmingly favor capital and technology investments over worker training as a route to productivity growth. In 1981 the annual expenditure on training by American firms was $300 per worker, versus over $3,300 per worker in capital investment.

Clearly, if the American economy is to be renewed, and unprecedented social upheaval averted, the nation's public- and private-sector training policies must be fundamentally reformed. Such reform must be grounded in economic, demographic, social and political realities.

I would suggest that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs has an opportunity to place veterans in the vanguard of this retraining, "retooling" of the American workforce, if you will, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is a necessary and feasible thing to do. Veterans are a discrete population, who at least in the service, were able to handle responsibility well, at a very young age.

VVA respectfully submits for your consideration the following general proposal:

1. That the Congress recognize the need for a retraining of the American workforce and the reality of "life long" adult learning by the elimination of the delimiting date at least for those men and women who served "in country."

2. That the extension be targeted toward critical areas, such as business, engineering, and other "hard" disciplines, that are most essential to the revitalization of the American economy. We don't need more philosophers and lawyers; we need more people who have the necessary technical skills to go with a "can-do" attitude, if we are to remain strong as a nation. As Mark Twain once said, "Not everybody can make a living taking in everybody else's laundry."

3. That such legislation be coordinated with other appropriate Committees of the House of Representatives.

4. That a more extensive set of hearings be held later this year, with such leading experts as Dr. Choate, Dr. Herbert Striner, Professor and former Dean of the Kogod College of Business Administration at the American University, and Dr. Dale Parnell, President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleagues being invited to testify. This would give all of us time to more properly do our homework on this issue.

5. The Congress can take a giant step forward by approving the House of Representatives proposed "All Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program" (Title VII of H.R. 5167) which is currently before the Conference Committee on the Department of Defense authorization bill. This would set a positive tone for the future.

Mr. Chairman, Vietnam Veterans of America thanks you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations this morning and for considering our thoughts on this matter. VVA, with your leave, looks forward to working with you and your staff toward development of this issue into a coherent legislative package which will win approval of the Congress, and be instrumental in keeping America strong well into the twenty-first century.

EDUCATIONAL DELIMITING DATE—V-8

Whereas, many veterans of the Vietnam War returned to a society often hostile to those who had faithfully served in the Armed Forces; and

Whereas, many post-secondary and graduate educational institutions failed to develop programs fostering and encouraging re-entry of the veteran into society with his or her non-veteran peers; and

Whereas, the average age of veterans of the Vietnam War generally precluded them from adjusting to and integrating into traditional academic endeavors, be it therefore

Resolved, that the VVA call upon the VA to amend its regulations, specifically to recognize that a delimiting date for educational benefits be extended if it can reasonably be shown that the veteran could not take meaningful advantage of these benefits because of the above stated reasons and a demonstration shown of the present need to utilize educational benefits to fully integrate into society, and let it be

Resolved, that the Vietnam Veterans of America seek the elimination of any delimiting date regarding utilization of GI Bill benefits.

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN VETERANS COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman: The American Veterans Committee thanks you for the opportunity to present its views to you on proposed legislation to end the delimiting for use of educational benefits.

My name is Frank E. G. Weil. I am the Chairman of AVC's Veterans Affairs Commission and served in the European Theatre, U.S. Army during World War II. AVC is a membership organization of veterans, men and women, who have served in World War I, World War II, the Korean conflict and the Vietnam war.

AVC has long had a position, adopted in convention, and last reaffirmed at the 1983 Convention. This position is as follows:

AVC urges the end of delimiting dates for use of benefits, for veterans who, for good reason, were unable to take advantage of educational and other benefits, so that their eligibility would be restored. The needs of many veterans, primarily female, to stay home and to raise preschool children, should be deemed a "good reason" in this context.

We believe that the G.I. Bill and other benefits designed to help veterans re-integrate into civilian life should not be cut off if the veteran has been unable to take advantage of them by a certain date. In most cases, delays in taking advantage of educational benefits are not caused because veterans are disinclined or too busy earning large sums of money—the delays are caused by the fact that the veteran is financially unable to meet family obligations while receiving G.I. Bill support at what is hardly a subsistence level. Women veterans, particularly, have delayed because they viewed their obligation to their children coming ahead of their obligation to themselves.

Furthermore, AVC understands the concerns that any new G.I. Bill with a delimiting date will cause qualified personnel to leave the armed forces. If there is no delimiting date, the personnel involved will, for the most part, be willing to wait until retirement, when G.I. Bill payments, when added to military pensions, will enable them to keep up their lifestyle while studying.

One of the arguments for a delimiting date is that it will keep down costs. Studies of previous G.I. Bills reveal that monies spent for educational benefits are a worthwhile investment for the nation, as well as the veteran.

Our platform points out:

AVC believes that experience has shown that the Federal funds used to pay educational benefits for veterans have been repaid to the Treasury many times over in the form of higher income taxes collected from those whose education, financed by the G.I. Bill, has resulted in higher earnings.

AVC therefore urges the abolition of delimiting dates.

Thank you for hearing the views of the American Veterans Committee on this important subject.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 2, 1984.

Hon. G.V. MONTGOMERY,
Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee, 335 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing in the hope that you will assist me in accommodating a request from a New York colleague to include a letter as part of the record of our Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on June 27, 1984.

Representative Gilman has contacted me and requested that a constituent letter he recently received be made a part of the record of our hearing on the G.I. Bill delimiting date extention. The letter is enclosed.

I hope this will not present any inconvenience or hardship for the committee staff. Should any difficulties develop in honoring this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Looking forward to your assistance in this matter, I am

Sincerely,

GERALD B. SOLOMON,
Member of Congress.

APRIL 26, 1984.

Tech Sergeant David L. Raimondi,
2208-B Ivy Place, Kirtland Air Force Base, NM.

CONGRESSMAN GILMAN, I hope it is not too late to ask for your assistance and vote in the house on some bills effecting military folks like myself. The first matter is my continuous concern over the deadline on the GI Bill, Dec. 1989. The talk going around the house and senate is to start a new GI Bill, instead of extending the deadline. I and my fellow airman are appalled at Rep Montgomery's statement to DOD to either accept his proposal for a new GI bill or take nothing.

It seems obvious that anyone who entered active duty when the GI bill was in force should be authorized those privilages upon separation or retirement from the service. Many, many military men and women who are authorized this entitlement will be forced to leave the service around 1985 or 1986 in order to use the GI bill. It is certainly not something we really want to do, leave the military prior to serving our full 20 years or so, but we would be absolute fools to pass up our GI Bill benefits.

I believe the cut off for the GI bill is sometime in 1975. An appropriate termination date for these privilages should be something like 30 years from that date in 1975 or grant authorized persons to have 10 years from separation date to use their privilages.

I personnally do not think that a new GI Bill is in order for any reason. The program in effect now, VEAP, is working pretty good where the gov't puts in double what the military person puts in towards his/her education. I wholeheartedly ask that you do not support HR 1400.

I swear I am sick to my stomach with all this talk in Congress about cutting benefits from the military. You people must be crazy! I dare any one of you in Congress to put the uniform on for a career serving your country all over the world, in some of the worst places. Long separations from your home and your family. Unexpected short notice TDY's, packing up and moving every couple of years. Cutting benefits is not the way to trim the deficit or lower DOD's budget. The few benefits we do have are not as great as you might think. Would you like your family to be treated at a military hospital with understaffed, unqualified and uncaring doctors? If I had the money I would certainly use off base facilities. But this benefit along with others like Commissary, BX, are a necessity and should not be cut nor should we have to explain why they are needed.

The big issue of course is Retirement. I'm sure it is the military's retirement system that has put this country in debt and we should cut it away with the biggest scissors available. BULL!!!!! For reasons that this paper is not big enough to hold, the military is special and deserves a retirement system like the one we've always had. You change this system and I think the defense of our nation will be severly hurt. When I hear talk of these changes, I and others feel like you are discussing welfare frauds.

As I've mentioned to you before in previous letters, I know you're not hot on some military issues because you have no real military community in your area. But regardless, these issues effect all Americans in the long run. I urge you to please think of the tough life servicemen have in the proud defense of our nation and support us in perserving the few meager benefits we have.

Sincerely,

D.L. RAIMONDI.

Statement of the American Association of Minority Veterans Program Administrators

The American Association of Minority Veterans Program Administrators supports the extension of the G.I. Bill until December 31, 1999. In granting Vietnam Era Veterans an extension on the time limit to use the remainder of their G.I. Bill entitlement, the Congress is making it possible for Veterans who were not able to successfully complete educational programs they had enrolled in an opportunity to do so, since many of these Veterans withdrew from programs as a result of the psychological readjustment problems experienced after serving in Vietnam. The studies conducted on Vietnam Veterans show that many Vietnam Veterans were not psychologically ready to pursue an educational program upon returning home because of trauma and lack of support services at home to help them cope with the traumatic experience of having had their lives disrupted and having served in an unpopular war. The Legacy of Vietnam Study performed by the Center for Policy showed that 70% of the Veterans failed to complete programs because of psychological problems, and in the case of Black Veterans, only 6% used their benefits in college because of psychological problems. The study also showed that Black Veterans were three times as likely to experience psychological problems as a result of having served in combat in South Vietnam.

The AAMVPA is deeply concerned with the minority since many of these are educationally disadvantaged and fall into this category, and because of having the entitlement but not being able to use it because of the ten year limitation, AAMVPA feels that due to complex problems and controversial nature of the Vietnam War, the Vietnam Veteran could not complete the readjustment process in ten years.

The AAMVPA organization has been an advocate serving Veterans. We are very much aware of the barriers that psychological readjustment problems have created for Vietnam Era Veterans in becoming productive members of society. In supporting this extension for these Veterans who also have a high unemployment rate (the rate for Black Veterans is twice as high as it is for White Veterans) you are giving them a second chance at becoming productive citizens. In many cases this Legislation will provide important job training necessary to re-enter the labor market and obtain gainful employment. AAMVPA feels that because of the Veterans' sacrifices, that they are deserving of the opportunity to use their benefits that they earned in the service of their nation. We urge you and your colleagues to support the passage of this important piece of Legislation. By working toward passage of this Legislation and in passing it, you are showing compassion for those who proudly served their country.

Statement of Stephen L. Edmiston, Deputy National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: On behalf of the more than 881,000 members of the Disabled American Veterans, may I say that we very much appreciate your invitation to present our views at today's hearing on whether or not the delimiting date of the Vietnam Era GI Bill should be extended.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, DAV membership is composed of honorably discharged veterans who were wounded, injured or otherwise disabled in the wartime service of their country. It therefore follows that our organization is primarily concerned with veterans' educational benefits provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program under Chapter 31 and the Surivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program provided under Chapter 35 of Title 38, U.S. Code.

Though our organization was founded on the principle that, in terms of veterans' benefits and services, our nation's first obligation rests with the rehabilitation of its service-connected wartime disabled, the DAV is also oncerned with those federal programs which have been designed to enhance the educational opportunities of veterans in general.

VIETNAM ERA GI BILL EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

As you know, Mr. Chairman, in recent years a number of legislative proposals have been introduced in Congress to extend or remove the December 31, 1989 termination date for Vietnam Era GI Bill educational benefits and extend or remove the ten (10) year delimiting period during which eligible veterans may take advantage of these benefits.

Public Law 94-502—The Veterans' Education and Employment Assistance Act of 1976—enacted on October 15, 1976 established, among other things, December 31,

1976 as the termination date for accrual of entitlement to veterans' educational benefits under Chapter 34, Title 38, U.S. Code and December 31, 1989 as the date when this educational assistance program will terminate.

The House Veterans Affairs Committee in reporting this legislation to terminate the Chapter 34 educational assistance program stated—

Committee believes that with the termination of the draft on July 1, 1973, and the President's Proclamation of May 7, 1975 ending the Vietnam wartime period, it is appropriate to terminate the current educational readjustment program. The educational assistance programs for World War II and Korean Conflict veterans, as well as those eligible under current law, have all been readjustment programs designed to help veterans to adjust from military to civilian life by affording them monetary aid to obtain an educational status they might normally have aspired to and obtained had they not served their country in wartime or a national emeegency. It was not contemplated that educational assistance was to be a *continuing peace time benefit.* (House Report No. 94-487) (Emphasis added.)

However, as you know, Mr. Chairman, this Committee, and indeed the entire Congress, has favorably responded to legislative initiatives in the recent past to extend the delimiting period for Vietnam Era veterans inorder that they might have additional opportunities to take advantage of their GI Bill educational benefits.

Specifically, Public Law 95-202 provided, among other things, an extension of the period of time (delimiting period) during which eligible veterans could utilize these benefits when it is established that a disability prevented the veteran from initiating or completing an educational program.

Additionally, Public Law 97-72 provided, in part, a "targeted extension" (from January 1, 1982 to December 31, 1983, and then subsequently extended to December 31, 1984 by P.L. 97-306 of the delimiting period for Vietnam Era veterans to use these benefits. Such extensions could be approved for the pursuit of vocational, apprenticeship or other on-the-job training if it was determined that such training was necessary in order for veterans to obtain reasonably stable employment.

As you can see, the Congress has, in the past, responded to legislative initiatives to extend the delimiting period for Vietnam Era GI Bill educational benefits, to include extending the time period during which an eligible veteran could use these benefits from eight (8) to ten (10) years (P.L. 93-337).

Clearly, GI Bill educational assistance programs provided to World War II, Korean Conflict and Vietnam Era veterans have all been close-ended and designed for the purpose of meeting the needs of veterans who have set aside or temporarily postponed higher educational pursuits because of voluntary active duty wartime service or conscription into the armed forces.

Those veterans whose lives were inadvertently interrupted by military service to our nation during times of war and armed conflict are deserving of educational readjustment benefits to ease their initial transition from military to civilian life—the Congress and the American people have supported such programs for the past forty years.

Mr. Chairman, because of the subject matter of today's hearing, I do wish to emphasize that there is no question of the DAV's concern for the well-being of those men and women who served as members of our armed forces in Vietnam—our record speaks for itself.

However, in regard to extending or modifying the delimiting or termination date of the Vietnam Era GI Bill, the DAV has not been mandated by our national membership to take an official position on such proposals.

That concludes our testimony, Mr. Chairman. I again wish to thank you and the members of the Subcommittee for providing the DAV this opportunity to comment on this issues.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, June 29, 1984.

Hon. G.V. MONTGOMERY,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans Affairs. Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.
335 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY: This is in response to the request for written reply to a question posed by Congressman Lane Evans during the Subcommittee's Hearing of June 27, on whether or not the delimiting date of the Vietnam era GI Bill should be extended.

Congressman Evans asked whether or not The American Legion would support an extension of the delimiting date specifically for those individuals who are currently

enrolled in a program of education or training, and stand to lose their entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 34 because of their delimiting date.

To reiterate a few points that were included in our prepared statement, The American Legion intensely supported the enactment of PL 93-337, extending the delimiting date for chapter 34 benefits from eight to ten years. Following the implementation of the ten year period, it became the policy of the Legion to oppose any further general extension of eligibility. It was felt that in most cases a ten-year period following active service is a reasonable amount of time to complete a program of education that is oriented toward readjustment or rehabilitation, and that a further general extension of the delimiting date would tend to compromise the readjustment nature of the current program by placing it in the category of an ongoing general entitlement.

As pointed out in our statement of June 27, the Legion has subsequently supported targeted extensions of the delimiting period for Vietnam veterans who were unable to complete their education or training within the ten-year period because of mental or physical disabilities; and, in the face of high unemployment, for unemployed, underemployed and undereducated Vietnam veterans.

According to Veterans Administration estimates, if the proposal to provide an extension of the delimiting date for only those veterans currently enrolled in a program of education or training under chapter 34 were enacted, it would affect 30,000 individuals at an estimated cost of $68 million during Fiscal Year 1985, decreasing to 1,875 veterans students at a cost of $4.250 million in FY 1989.

The fact that the Congress has enacted laws to provide an additional period of time for those Vietnam veterans who are truly deserving of an extended delimiting period to pursue educational or vocational training brings into question why individuals currently enrolled are now in a situation where they stand to lose their educational assistance benefits. The American Legion has serious reservations about extending eligibility for these readjustment benefits to veterans who just arbitrarily decided to get an education after seven, eight or nine years had lapsed following separation from active duty, considering that hundreds of thousands of their peers diligently took advantage of this opportunity within the period of time authorized by law. Additionally, we question the equity of providing an extension of benefits for individuals currently enrolled in a program of higher education, and not for those who may decide to commence such a program next week, next month, or any other time prior to the termination of the educational assistance program under chapter 34.

For the foregoing reasons The American Legion must adhere to it's current policy on this issue and oppose the proposed limited extension of the ten-year delimiting period.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate your interest in the views of The American Legion on issues of importance to veterans.

Sincerely,

JOHN F. SOMMER, Jr.,
Deputy Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF BENEFITS DIRECTOR,
Washington, DC, July 17, 1984.

Hon. GERALD SOLOMON,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SOLOMON: Thank you for affording me the opportunity to respond to questions concerning the June 27, 1984 hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

In the enclosure that follow, I have outlined our replies.

I appreciate the opportunity to be of assistance in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN W. HAGAN, Jr.,
For DOROTHY L. STARBUCK,
Chief Benefits Director.

Enclosures.

Question 1. Please comment upon the targeted extension of the Vietnam G.I. Bill contained in Public Law 97-72, P.L. 97-306 and P.L. 98-77. How many extension were approved?

Answer. The targeted extension of the G.I. Bill for Vietnam Era Veterans was enacted at a time when the unemployment rate among such veterans was very high.

Public Law 97-72 was intended to be a onetime opportunity to receive adequate training which would give eligible veterans skills to immediately obtain employment. Today, there is not the same sense of urgency that previously existed. From Janurary 1, 1983, through May 31, 1984, there have been 22,077 targeted extensions granted by the Veterans Administration.

Question 2. Do you have a feeling that there is a great desire across the country among Vietnam Era veterans to have the delimiting date extended?

Answer. No. It has been 9 years since the hostilities in Vietnam have ceased. The majority of Vietnam Era veterans have participated in readjustment programs. However, the Administration is in favor of repealing the 1989 educational benefits program date, so as to afford those veterans discharged after December 31, 1979, the full 10-year delimiting period granted other eligible veterans in which to use their earned educational entitlement.

Question 3. One proposal before us would extend the delimiting date for only those Vietnam Era veterans who were in training already as of October 1, 1983. Would you comment on that proposal?

Answer. We believe that further extension of the delimiting date is not warranted and is inconsistent with the readjustment intent of our education program. We believe that veterans eligible under the current program have sufficient time to pursue education or training to assist them in meeting the readjustment concept of the G.I. Bill.

Question 4. One proposal has been advanced to extend the delimiting date only for those veterans who actually served in Vietnam. Would you please comment on this proposal?

Answer. We are opposed to such an extension. Again, because it is not within the meaning of the readjustment concept. Also, we see no reason to benefit one group of veterans over another group because the individual served in the military service in one area or another. Both were called upon to fulfill his or her military functions.

Question 5. A proposal has been made to target and extension of the G.I. Bill toward what are termed "hard" disciplines such as business and emergency and not toward philosophy or law. Would you please comment on how you would administer such an approach?

Answer. The targeted extension currently is available to veterans who elect a program to obtain a reasonably stable employment situation that fits his or her abilities and aptitudes. Extensions under this program may be granted to pursue job training, a program with a vocational objective or an associate degree program which is predominantly vocational in content.

If legislation is enacted to continue the current targeted extension no change would be warranted in our current procedures. However, if the question suggests a general extension of the delimiting date we would be required to institute the same parameters to all applicable veterans seeking an extension of their delimiting dates.

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION BY JOHN F. SOMMER, JR., DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION, ON G.I. BILL DELIMITING DATE EXTENSION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: The American Legion is pleased to have the opportunity to present its views on the question of whether or young persons who might not otherwise be able to afford such an education; program under chapter 34 of title 38, United States Code should be extended.

Educational and training programs for Vietnam era veterans were developed by Congress to enhance and make more attractive, service in the Armed Forces of the United States; extend the benefits of higher education to qualified and deserving young persons who might not otherwise be able to afford such and education; provide vocational readjustment and restore lost educational opportunities to those servicemen and women whose careers were interrupted or impeded by reason of active duty; and aid such persons in attaining the vocational and educational status which they might normally have aspired to and attained had they not served their country.

Available statistics illustrate the value of the GI Bill education and training programs, in that over 70% of eligible Vietnam era veterans have had at least some training under GI Bill programs.

The American Legion intensely supported the enactment of P.L. 93-337, which extended the period of time subsequent to a veteran's last discharge or separation from active duty that such veteran would be afforded educational assistance under chapter 34 of the title from eight to ten years. Following the approval of that law

and the implementation of the ten-year delimiting period, it became the policy of the Legion to oppose any further general extension of the delimiting date. The reasoning behind the formulation of this policy was that in most cases a ten-year period following active service is a reasonable amount of time to complete a readjustment or rehabilitation program.

However, it became more and more evident that some Vietnam veterans, particularly those who had been involved in heavy combat, were experiencing delays or hardships in completing their programs of education or training within the delimiting period because of mental or physical disabilities. Therefore, The American Legion supported the passage of P.L. 95–202, which granted an extension of the applicable delimiting period for a length of time, determined by the Administrator based upon available medical evidence, that a veteran with such disability was prevented from initiating or completing a program of education.

Likewise, during hearings held in early 1981, the Legion expressed its concern about continuing economic and readjustment problems, and the unemployment of Vietnam era veterans. It was for those reasons, that the Legion, although mandated to oppose a general extension of the chapter 34 delimiting date, did not oppose the targeted extension proposed in the legislation under consideration at that time, and which was mandated through the enactment of P.L. 97–72.

During subsequent hearings in 1982, we expressed extreme concern that the regulations proposed by VA with respect to the implementation of the targeted extension of the delimiting period were far too restrictive; that they did not fully address the purpose for which the legislation was enacted; and that if the eligibility criteria was not broadened, the limited extension of the ten-year delimiting period set forth in P.L. 97–72 would have been of assistance to a minuscule number of unemployed Vietnam veterans. These hearings, as you are aware Mr. Chairman, resulted in a liberalization of those regulations.

Although not directly related to the delimiting period, the Legion has also voiced strong support for other legislation of great importance to veteran students and unemployed Vietnam era veterans, one example of which was the restoration of eligibility for veterans in receipt of educational benefits and/or disability compensation to secure Guaranteed Student Loans and Pell Grants, eligibility for which, in most instances, was eliminated for the purpose of cost savings, through enactment of Public Laws 97–35 (Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981) and 97–92 (Joint Resolution making further continuing appropriations for Fiscal Year 1982).

In addition, The American Legion very actively supported the enactment of P.L. 98–77—the Emergency Veterans Job Retraining Act—to provide training to unemployed and underemployed Korean and Vietnam era veterans.

Most recently, we have supported increases in the rates of subsistence and educational assistance allowances for veterans pursuing education or training programs administered by the Veterans Administration.

Mr. Chairman, we are cognizant of a recent proposal, the intent of which would provide an extension of the delimiting date for the current GI Bill educational assistance program, and make each an extension subject to available appropriations.

As previously stated, The American Legion is opposed to a general extension of the ten-year delimiting period, as it would tend to compromise the readjustment nature of the current program by placing it in the category of a general entitlement program.

In addition, as illustrated by the examples of enacted legislation set forth in this statement, the Congress has most assuredly addressed the needs of those Vietnam era veterans who are truly deserving of an extended delimiting period in order to secure education or training opportunities that they have heretofore not been able to get for reasons beyond their control.

With respect to subjecting the proposed extension of the delimiting date to available appropriations, such a proposal is inconsistent with the intended purpose of the educational assistance program for Vietnam era veterans.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our statement, and again, we appreciate this opportunity to present our views to the Subcommittee.

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